

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
AT CHATTANOOGA**

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------|
| TANJA BENTON, |) | |
| |) | |
| <i>Plaintiff,</i> |) | |
| |) | Case No. 1:22-cv-118 |
| v. |) | |
| |) | Judge Atchley |
| BLUECROSS BLUESHIELD OF |) | |
| TENNESSEE, INC., |) | Magistrate Judge Lee |
| |) | |
| <i>Defendant.</i> |) | |

JUDGMENT ORDER

This action came before the Court for a trial by jury. The issues have been tried, and the jury has rendered its verdict.

The jury found that Plaintiff, TANJA BENTON, proved by a preponderance of the evidence that her refusal to receive the Covid vaccination was based upon a sincerely held religious belief. The parties stipulated that the remaining elements of Plaintiff's claims were met and the jury was so instructed. The jury further found that Defendant, BLUECROSS BLUESHIELD OF TENNESSEE, INC., did not prove by a preponderance of the evidence either that it had offered a reasonable accommodation to Plaintiff or that it could not reasonably accommodate the Plaintiff's religious beliefs without undue hardship. Liability for Plaintiff's religious accommodation claims is therefore established by the jury's verdict.

Finally, the jury found that Plaintiff proved her entitlement to punitive damages by a preponderance of the evidence. By separate verdict, the jury awarded punitive damages. The jury awarded total damages to Plaintiff in the amount of **\$687,240.00**, comprised of \$177,240.00 in back pay damages, \$10,000.00 in compensatory damages, and, by separate verdict, \$500,000.00

in punitive damages.

Accordingly, judgment is entered in favor of Plaintiff TANJA BENTON and against Defendant BLUECROSS BLUESHIELD OF TENNESSEE, INC. in the amount of **\$687,240.00** with post-judgment interest at the rate set by 28 U.S.C. § 1961.

SO ORDERED.

/s/Charles E. Atchley, Jr.

CHARLES E. ATCHLEY JR.
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

ENTERED AS A JUDGMENT

/s/ LeAnna Wilson

LeAnna Wilson
CLERK OF COURT